

## White House Conference on Aging Summary report

Recommendations related to conference theme and agenda.

***Let's Put Friendly Visiting On the Map: A Symposium for Professionals and Students*** speaks to the area of social engagement, specifically: “integration of the elderly with the non-elderly community”; “strategies for changing attitudes towards aging”; “increasing opportunities for volunteerism and other forms of civic engagement”; and “promoting expanded opportunities for companionship to reduce isolation and loneliness.”

### Priority Issue#1

The elderly frequently experience loneliness and isolation. Frailty and physical impairments make it difficult for them to leave their homes without assistance. They live on fixed incomes, have few social contacts, and limited access to social services and community resources. With the aging population expanding, there will be an increasing number of homebound elders, isolated due to the loss of family and friends. **Friendly Visiting matches seniors with volunteers who visit on a regular basis.** These ongoing relationships provide support and a connection to the community. **Friendly Visiting** is uniquely suited to address the needs for socialization and companionship by promoting friendship across the generations.

### Barriers:

Socialization and companionship programs, such as **Friendly Visiting**, are not considered essential services, despite the fact that they provide seniors with companionship, delay institutionalization, extend the reach of social service agencies through the use of volunteers, enhance quality of life and promote self-esteem and intergenerational exchange. With very limited funding available for **Friendly Visiting Programs**, organizations face the challenge of how to fund volunteer visiting initiatives.

### Proposed Solutions:

Federal recognition of **Friendly Visiting** as a vital service to maintain frail elders within the community, is a first step in promoting the importance of volunteer visiting. There are thousands of **Friendly Visiting Programs** across the country from small faith-based initiatives to programs that are part of the continuum of care offered by social service agencies that serve the elderly. **Friendly Visiting Programs** operate in rural communities as well as large metropolitan areas. Creation of funding opportunities for volunteer visiting programs that serve to: reduce loneliness and isolation; increase access to other social services (such as home-delivered meals, transportation, home-care); promote volunteerism; and integrate the elderly into the non-elderly community, would encourage new initiatives and sustain existing programs.